

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 IO-13 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 /081 W

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

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E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: OVIP, UNGA, US, MY

SUBJECT: PRESS SPECULATION ON AGENDA FOR PRIME MINISTER'S
TALKS IN U.S.

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 6247

1. SUMMARY: MASS CIRCULATION ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY HEAD-
LINED SEPT 6 GOM ANNOUNCEMENT PRIME MINISTER TO MEET PRESI-
DENT CARTER AND CONTENDS US-ASEAN RELATIONS WILL FIGURE
PROMINENTLY IN TALKS. ARTICLE PREDICTS PM WILL ALSO SEEK
ELABORATION OF U.S. POLICY TOWARD ASIA, AND SPECULATES OTHER
TOPICS WILL PROBABLY INCLUDE PROPOSED NEUTRALIZATION OF
SOUTHEAST ASIA, ASEAN-INDOCHINESE RELATIONS, AND THE PHASED
WITHDRAWAL OF AMERICAN GROUND TROOPS FROM SOUTH KOREA.
SENIOR MFA OFFICIAL, HOWEVER, DESCRIBED REPORT AS SPECULATIVE
IN MANY RESPECTS.

2. SEPT 7 EDITION OF MASS CIRCULATION ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY
"NEW STRAITS TIMES" (NST) IN FRONT-PAGED STORY HEADLINED
"CARTER TO HEAR ASEAN CASE: HUSSEIN TO DISCUSS U.S. ROLE IN
REGION" REPORTED THAT ASEAN' RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.
WILL FEATURE PROMINENTLY IN DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN MALAYSIA
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PM DATUK HUSSEIN ONN AND PRESIDENT CARTER WHEN THE TWO
LEADERS MEET IN WASHINGTON AT THE END OF THE MONTH.
ACCORDING NST, "DATUK HUSSEIN, WHO WILL BE THE FIRST
ASEAN LEADER TO CALL ON THE PRESIDENT, IS EXPECTED TO
SPELL OUT THE ROLE THAT ASEAN HEADS OF GOVERNMENT WOULD
LIKE THE U.S. TO PLAY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. ACCORDING TO
OFFICIAL SOURCES, THE U.S. COULD CERTAINLY PLAY A

COMPLEMENTARY AND SUPPORTIVE ROLE IN THE REGION." NST WENT ON TO PREDICT THAT "ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT, IT IS EXPECTED THAT DATUK HUSSEIN WILL STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF FREE TRADE, PARTICULARLY ACCESS OF ASEAN COMMODITIES AND PRODUCTS TO THE AMERICAN MARKET, COMMODITY PRICE STABILIZATION SCHEMES AND AMERICAN INVESTMENT IN THE AREA. DATUK HUSSEIN WILL SEEK AN ASSURANCE FROM PRESIDENT CARTER THAT THE U.S. WILL CONTINUE TO ALLOW ASEAN PALM OIL TO ENTER THAT COUNTRY WITHOUT ANY RESTRICTION." REPORT ALSO CONTENDS THAT "POLITICALLY, THE PM IS LIKELY TO IMPRESS UPON THE AMERICAN LEADER THAT ASEAN IS A STRONG VIBRANT ORGANIZATION WITH A STRONG POLITICAL WILL AND THAT INCREASINGLY THE GROUP WOULD LIKE TO DEAL COLLECTIVELY WITH THE BIG POWERS WITHOUT AFFECTING BILATERAL RELATIONS. GOING IN THE WAKE OF THE FIRST ASEAN-US DIALOGUE IN MANILA AND THE SECOND ASEAN SUMMIT IN KUALA LUMPUR, DATUK HUSSEIN WILL UNDOUBTEDLY GIVE THE PRESIDENT A RUN-DOWN OF THE GROUP'S POSITION AND ITS DELIBERATIONS."

3. THE NST ITEM ADDED THAT "IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT THE PM WILL SEEK MORE DETAILS ON THE CARTER ADMINISTRATIONS'S POLICIES TOWARD ASIA AS OUTLINED BY SECRETARY OF STATE MR. CYRUS VANCE IN NEW YORK TWO MONTHS AGO," NOTING THAT, MR. VANCE HAD EMPHASIZED THAT THE U.S. QUOTE IS AND WILL REMAIN AN ASIAN AND PACIFIC POWER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UNQUOTE AND THAT AMERICA QUOTE WILL CONTINUE ITS KEY ROLE IN CONTRIBUTING TO PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE REGION UNQUOTE". THE NST AUTHOR ALSO CONTENDED THAT, "THE PROPOSED NEUTRALIZATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIA; THE MAIN PILLAR OF MALAYSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY (SIC); ASEAN-INDOCHINESE RELATIONS AND THE PHASED WITHDRAWAL OF AMERICAN GROUND TROOPS FROM SOUTH KOREA WILL PROBABLY FEATURE IN THE TALKS."

4. THE NST REPORTED THAT THE PM WILL TRAVEL SEPT 23 FROM TOKYO VIA HONOLULU TO LOS ANGELES, WHERE HE WILL SPEND TWO DAYS AND MEET WITH INDUSTRIALISTS AND BANKERS. ACCORDING NST, WHILE IN NEW YORK THE PM IN A ASIA SOCIETY MEETING WILL DELIVER A MAJOR ADDRESS ON SOUTHEAST ASIA PERSPECTIVES.

5. A SENIOR MFA OFFICIAL TOLD DCM THAT THE NST ITEM WAS SPECULATIVE, AND NOT BASED ON OFFICIAL BRIEFINGS. HE CITED REFERENCE TO SUBJECT OF WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. GROUND TROOPS FROM KOREA AS EXAMPLE OF SPECULATIVE NATURE OF ARTICLE. A LOWER RANKING MFA OFFICIAL SIMILARLY DENIED STORY WAS BASED ON AUTHORITATIVE

SOURCES, BUT SAID THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER WOULD BE MEETING PRESS TODAY AND VISITS TO JAPAN AND U.S. WOULD PROBABLY FIGURE PROMINENTLY IN NEWSMEN'S QUESTIONS.

6. COMMENT: SUBSTANCE OF NST ARTICLE IS NOT EXTRA-ORDINARY, AND A NUMBER OF THE SUBJECTS MENTIONED WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE BROUGHT UP BY PM IN COURSE OF HIS MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT AND OTHER USG OFFICIALS. HOWEVER, ARTICLE DOES ALSO APPEAR TO CONTAIN SOME RATHER EXUBERANT SPECULATION GOING WELL BEYOND THE BASIC GOM ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE VISIT.

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